



The Heritage Junction Dispatch

A Publication of the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Volume 37, Issue 6

November-December 2011

Calendar

Monday, November 28

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Thursday, December 1

Deadline for the January- February
Dispatch

Saturday, December 10

Talk on Southern Pacific Stations in
the Santa Clara River Valley,
1:00 PM

Christmas Open House,
1:00 to 4:00 PM,
Saugus Station

Monday, December 26

Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 PM Saugus Station

Check www.scvhistory.org for
other upcoming events.

Articles and inquiries
regarding *The Dispatch* may
be made to 254-1275

President's Message

by Alan Pollack



He was the first man crazy enough to hurtle the summit of the San Fernando (now Newhall) Pass by stagecoach. Los Angeles freighting king Phineas Banning's wild ride over

the San Fernando Pass is described in "Reminiscences of a Ranger: Early Times in Southern California", the 1881 book by Major Horace Bell about his times as a California Ranger (and the first book to be published in Los Angeles):

"In December 1854, Phineas Banning sat on the box of his Concord stage, to which were harnessed a half-dozen well-fed and panting

mustangs. He had succeeded in reaching the summit of the San Fernando and the question among his nine wondering passengers who had toiled up the mountain on foot was, how that stage could ever descend, all declaring it an act of madness to attempt it. Banning laughingly assured them that 'It was all right; that a man who couldn't drive a stage safely down that hill was no driver at all and he should confine himself to ox-teaming in the Valley.' Now he cracks his whip, tightens his lines, whistles to his trembling mustangs, and urges them to the brink of the precipice, and in a moment they are going down! Down! Down! Rackety, clatter, bang! Sometimes the Stage ahead of the horses; all, however, going down! Down! With a crash! Finally the conglomeration of chains, harness, coach, mustangs and Banning were found by the pursuing passengers in an inextricable mass of confusion - contusions, cracks and breaks, forming a general smash

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**TALK ON SOUTHERN PACIFIC
RAILROAD STATIONS
IN THE SANTA CLARA RIVER VALLEY
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1:00 PM
FREE AT SAUGUS STATION**

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President's Message

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and pile-up in a thicket of chaparral at the foot of the mountain. 'Didn't I tell you so?' said Banning, 'a beautiful descent; far less difficult than I had anticipated; I intended that staging to Ft. Tejon and Kern River should be a success. Gentlemen, you see that my judgment is good.' However, Banning sent back a courier in hot haste, urging Don David Alexander to send fifty men immediately to repair parts of the road that he, in his descent, knocked out of joint."

The freighting firm of Alexander and Banning had decided to run a six horse stagecoach over the San Fernando Pass to reach the newly opened Fort Tejon through San Francisquito Canyon in 1854. But getting a vehicle over this treacherous pass was no easy task. Bell describes the Pass: "At that time the trail going over the San Fernando Pass was a rocky acclivity, difficult of ascent even by a pack mule, and descending to the Valley beyond with a descent of equal abruptness. Standing on the summit and looking northward, a precipice of many hundred feet lay before you. By facing about, you dizzily marveled at how you reached the rocky summit." To accomplish the task, David Alexander led a project to make a 30 foot cut in the mountains that 10 years later was deepened to 90 feet when it became known as Beale's Cut. Banning used this cut to make his historic, but ultimately messy, stagecoach ride.

Phineas Banning is one of the major figures in Los Angeles history. Born in Wilmington, Delaware, Banning traveled from Philadelphia to San Pedro, California, in 1851. At the time of Banning's arrival in Southern California, Los Angeles was a sleepy pueblo of 2000 people with a tiny port in a swampy area of San Pedro. Banning first took a job as a store clerk in San Pedro and later became a stagecoach driver between San Pedro and the pueblo. The ambitious Banning envisioned a thriving international port at San Pedro, but first set about creating a wagon and freighting empire in Los Angeles. He established a freight line from San Pedro to Los Angeles as well as a freighting and wagon route between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City (via Santa Fe). When he learned of the army's plans to build Fort Tejon in the Tehachapi Mountains, Banning set about to conquer the challenging San Fernando Pass in order to establish a wagon route to serve the troops at the new fort. This set the stage for the road he built with David Alexander over the pass in 1854, and his seemingly ill-advised stagecoach adventure, which represented the beginning of vehicular traffic between the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys. More importantly, he was the first to "conquer" a major obstruction of commerce and travel between Northern

and Southern California. His visionary ride over the San Fernando Pass paved the way for later accomplishments like Beale's Cut and the Ridge Route, which served to solidify the connection between the two halves of the state.

Banning is also credited as being the father of the Port of Los Angeles. He first purchased 640 acres of mud flats near San Pedro. Initially known as Banning's Landing, this area eventually became the town of Wilmington (named after his home town in Delaware). In a biography of Banning for the Historical Society of Southern California, Jon Wilkman writes: "He then cut a narrow barge canal to carry heavy freight from the harbor to the town. In 1859, the first ocean-going vessel anchored in his new harbor. After that, with pride mixed with a sense of humor, Banning enjoyed being called "Port Admiral." Thirteen years later the government dredged the harbor, and San Pedro became an official American international port of entry."

As the Civil War approached, Los Angeles became a mixed bag of Union and Confederate sympathizers. Banning's political leanings favored the Union. When the United States government decided to establish a military presence near Los Angeles, Banning donated some of his land in Wilmington for what would become the Drum Barracks. Aside from helping the Union cause, Banning benefited financially as well from his donation when he obtained lucrative government contracts. The Drum Barracks remained active between 1861 and 1871, serving as the headquarters for the Union's Southwestern command for the state of California and territory of Arizona. As a result of his donation, Banning was later made an honorary Brigadier General by the United States Government. For the remainder of his life he proudly carried the title of General Banning.

In 1868, Banning turned his attention from wagons to railroads. He built a small railroad to connect the port at San Pedro with downtown Los Angeles. But Banning was no match for the railroad barons of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Charles Crocker and his "Big Four" partners had completed the Central Pacific Railroad and connected with the Union Pacific to establish the Transcontinental Railroad in May of 1869. After that historic accomplishment, the Big Four began buying up smaller railroads in California to create the Southern Pacific Railroad. Among those railroads bought out by the Southern Pacific was Newhall town founder Henry Mayo Newhall's San Francisco and San Jose Railroad. The Southern Pacific owners were somewhat

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ruthless in their determination to dominate the railroad business in California. They outmaneuvered Newhall, but as consolation placed him on their Board of Directors. The ultimate goal of the Southern Pacific in the 1870's was to connect Northern and Southern California by rail. As they approached Los Angeles, the railroad barons of the Southern Pacific threatened to bypass the city unless paid \$600,000 and given control of Banning's Los Angeles and San Pedro Railway. Crocker knew that Los Angeles needed the railroad to survive and grow and threatened "I will make grass grow in your streets". It was a deal too good to refuse. Banning lost his railroad to the Southern Pacific. In September of 1876, the Southern Pacific Railroad was completed at Lang Station in Soledad Canyon.

The Father of the Port of Los Angeles did not actually live to see the Port become a reality. He spent his final years at his Greek Revival mansion (now known as the Banning Mansion) in Wilmington. He died in 1885, after suffering injuries in an accident in San Francisco. After Banning's death, Collis Huntington and the Southern Pacific Railroad tried to establish a major competing port for Los Angeles in Santa Monica and the Great Free Harbor Fight was begun. Huntington had many friends in the Senate. Through his influence, the Senate Commerce Committee crafted the 1896 Rivers and Harbors Bill which would award an appropriation for a breakwater to Santa Monica and the Southern Pacific. The Southern Pacific met its match when California Senator Stephen White, with the backing of powerful *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harrison Gray Otis, took to the Senate floor in June, 1896 and delivered a scathing 2-day indictment of the Southern Pacific's predatory practices. White offered an amendment to the bill allowing any railroad to use the harbor for a reasonable fee if Santa Monica were chosen. The full Senate passed the bill including the White amendment, effectively killing Huntington's effort to steal the port away from San Pedro. The Port of Los Angeles was officially founded in San Pedro on December 9, 1907. 22 years after his death, Banning's vision had come to fruition.

HAPPENINGS AT THE JUNCTION

The Historical Society Lecture Series returns on December 10, when the Saugus Train Station will be host to architectural historian Jean-Guy Dube. Mr. Dube will give a talk on the Southern Pacific Railroad Depots of the Santa Clara River Valley. The Southern Pacific Railroad built

through this valley in 1887. During its march to the sea, the Southern Pacific built several common standard depots along its route, from nearby Saugus to Ventura California, and over time connecting Los Angeles to San Francisco with its new coastal route. This lecture will focus on some of these depots of the Santa Clara River Valley and will include their history, plans, features, building materials and their fates. In addition, Mr. Dube will display several blueprints of these depots that he has drafted over the past 10 years. The talk will start at 1:00 PM at the Saugus Train Station, and admission is free. Jean-Guy Dube is an apprenticing architect and architectural historian who has been researching Southern Pacific's depots since 1985. In 2001, he applied his work experience in architectural drafting to re-creating blueprints of some of Southern Pacific's common standard depots. He has architectural history degrees from The University of California and is employed by one of the top 100 architects in the United States, Architect Marc Appleton.

The Historical Society was thrilled to host on September 17 Bobbi Jean Bell's Outwest Concert Series, featuring WMA 2010 Outstanding Female Vocalist of the Year Mary Kaye, along with the locally-popular band The Cross Town Cowboys. A great time was had by all in attendance. We hope to continue to collaborate in Bobbi Jean's efforts to create a revitalized arts, entertainment and shopping district in Old Town Newhall.

As the year 2011 draws to a close, we at the Historical Society wish you all a Merry Christmas and happy and prosperous New Year. As you are making your New Year's resolutions, why not consider increasing your active participation and support of the Historical Society in our quest to preserve and teach the rich history of your community and valley. We are always in need of volunteers at the Junction. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities, contact our Executive Director Pat Saletore at 661 254-1275. We also hope to kick off our Capital Campaign in 2012 to help with the opening of a new museum of local history in the Pardee House. We hope we can count on your support and donations to make this a reality. Thank you all for your continued interest in the Historical Society, and we hope to see you at the Train Station.

Alan Pollack

Docent Opportunities by Pat Saletore

Do you like history? Do you want to contribute to the SCV community?

The Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society will be presenting its docent training class series on Saturday mornings during the month of November. If you would like to attend, or you know someone who would like to learn more about our local history, this is your chance. There is no charge, but it does come with strings. If you take this class, we kind of expect you to donate at least one weekend day a month for at least a year. If you don't like being a docent, that's fine, but give it a chance. If you are more interested in giving your time in restoration or maintenance, there will be people available to discuss that with you. After completing the docent training, if it is clear that you like it, you might be invited to also work with the library committee or in the Archives. This is perfect for people who love history, rare information and books. Our library will ultimately have close to 2000 books when it opens.

I know that some of you who are receiving this e-mail are already up to your eyeballs in Historical Society alligators, but you might know others who would really love to get involved in our organization. This is the perfect first stop.

We haven't had docent training for a while. It involves a lot of time and work for the presenter(s), so we can't be certain when another one will be available. If this is something you have wanted to do...this is the time!

Reply with your phone number, so we can talk more about what is involved, or call me at 661 254-1275. I will also send you an invitation to the docent yahoo mailing list. This makes sure you get all the news, access to informational files and websites for docents. At the first class, we will give you a digital copy of our docent training manual. You can read it on your computer, or take it to a copy store and print it out. You could get it bound, but I suggest putting it into a binder so you can add to it.

Working at the SCV Historical Society gives you the opportunity to meet our members, but also interact with the public. It is great to learn the ins and outs of our history. There are some great stories just waiting for you to find. There are all kinds of things to learn besides what happened here and who made it happen. You can use garden tools or power tools. You can find out how to whitewash an adobe, or strip paint. We are on the verge of furnishing our new museum in the Pardee House. You get to hang out in buildings that are reportedly haunted. You get to hang out in buildings that were visited by Charlie Chaplin, Frank Sinatra and Tom Mix. You get to know where the bodies are really buried in this town!

Hart Museum in the Holiday Spirit by Rachel Barnes



The holidays are fast approaching, and the Hart Museum is ready to celebrate with the annual Cowboys and Carols holiday concert on Saturday, December 10, 2011, at 7:00 PM. Come on out to revel in the holiday season and

to celebrate Bill Hart's 147th birthday with a special Western- style concert performed by the award-winning acoustic band, *The Tumbling Tumbleweeds* (at <http://www.thetumblingtumbleweeds.com>). Relax in Bill Hart's Living Room amongst his amazing collection of Western artwork and Native American artifacts, while the *Tumbleweeds* delight and amaze you with their own special blend of songs, stories, humor, and fancy western footwork.

Refreshments will be provided, and this twilight concert will also provide a unique opportunity to see and tour the Hart Mansion and its collections, fully resplendent in twinkling holiday decorations. Tickets are \$40 per person. Check out <http://www.hartmuseum.org> for further details. You will not want to miss this truly unique holiday event.

Join the SCV Historical Society Today!

Life Member	\$350.00
Life Member with spouse	\$500.00
Corporate	\$200.00
Non-profit	\$50.00
Family Member	\$50.00
Regular member	\$25.00
Senior Member (60+)	\$15.00
Junior (18 & under)	\$9.00

Memberships make great gifts for your historically-minded friends and family! To join or renew online, visit <http://www.scvhs.org>.

Make a Difference Day by Ed Marg

Make a Difference Day at Heritage Junction this year really made difference for us. On Saturday, October 22, about 50 employees from ITT Aerospace Controls showed up and accomplished some big things, including donating about \$1,200 worth of materials to get the job done.

Here is what the small army from ITT accomplished: They sanded, primed and painted the porch deck on the Newhall Ranch House, did the same for the

Mitchell Adobe School House's door, window trim and eaves, sanded all the rust off and primed the Steel Utility building that serves as our grounds tool shed, and finally they installed 3 large shelving units (donated by Al Frisch) in our storage container and organized everything in it.

Thank You So Much, ITT and all the additional Volunteers that came out and helped!



When Frank Sinatra “Suddenly” Visited Newhall

by John Boston

It's hard to do an estimation, but easily there have been thousands of movies, TV shows, commercials and addendum films shot within the confines of the Santa Clarita Valley.

Oddly enough, perhaps the most significant film from a local history standpoint is a little-known film noir entitled, “Suddenly.”

It doesn't exactly make the Top 10 Films of Frank Sinatra. Oddly enough, perhaps the most famous singer in the history of the world wasn't even the star: He was the villain.

A little more than a half-century ago, a production company motored into Newhall and Saugus and took over the sleepy little “Village” as the valley was also known as back then.

The hero of the film was the king of those grainy black-&-white “B” movies, Sterling Hayden. He was star of one of the best film noir movies ever - “The Killing” - a compelling crime drama about how a team of cons shoot a thoroughbred during a race as a cover to rob the racetrack.

In “Suddenly,” it was an interesting juxtapositioning. Here you had Hayden as a communist sympathizer in real life, and Sinatra who, despite his lifelong flirtation with organized crime, was extremely patriotic.

Lewis Allen directed this 1954 film, made entirely in the SCV. The storyline is about how a team of hired killers tries to intercept the president of the United States as he steps off a train en route to his annual fishing vacation. The film's name comes from the name of the fictitious little town, “Suddenly,” which appears in front of present-day 6th Street and Main Street, kitty corner to the Canyon Theatre Guild today.

Sinatra plays Johnny Baron, a hitman who gets the contract to 86 the commander-in-chief. Baron and his gang break into a quiet home where they hope to pick off the president in his small motorcade. Baron and his thugs also end up kidnapping Sheriff Tod Shaw, played by Hayden.

No surprise, like many actors, “Hayden” wasn't Sterling's original name. His parents were George and Frances Walter. They named him Sterling Relyea Walter. After George died, he was adopted at the age of nine by James Hayden and renamed Sterling Walter Hayden.

At an early age, Hayden discovered the sea and almost stumbled into acting. The ever-hungry show business machine touted him as “the Most Beautiful Man in the Movies” and “the Beautiful Blond Viking God.” In real life, Sterling was an athletic adventurer who weighed over 200 pounds and stood 6-foot-5.

But he never made it to the “A” list of Hollywood. There were two reasons.

First, Hayden never really liked acting. Second, he was briefly a communist - not a popular enrollment in America during the 1950's. To his death, he despised his decision to cooperate with the Committee on Un-American Activities. At the height of his career and after a bitter divorce, he essentially kidnapped his children and fled on a sailboat to Tahiti. He would later write a best-selling and critically acclaimed book: “Voyage: A Novel of 1896.” Hayden would come back to film, primarily, he said, to make money to support his boating habit. He may be most memorable as General Jack D. Ripper in the classic nuclear war satire, “Dr. Strangelove.”

On the other hand, Sinatra was just coming off his return to stardom in his Oscar-winning film, “From Here to Eternity” when he visited the SCV to make “Suddenly.”

There were mixed feelings about the Libra Productions camping out here. Although the company took only two weeks to make the film, a lot of people complained about the delays of blocking off many streets and businesses. Unlike today, the sheriff's department basically shut down the streets and the company didn't pay any neighbors for inconveniencing them. On the other hand, the production crew dropped a lot of money in town, especially for location fees, catering and use of local extras.

There are a few good reasons to rent this film or buy it on DVD. First, it's not too bad a movie. Granted, you have to take it with a grain of salt and enjoy it for its period, what with all the fast “Why I oughta”-type dialogue. But the main reason to see “Suddenly” is because there is no better record of what the Santa Clarita Valley looked like in the 1950's. If you're an old-timer, you'll howl at some of the old landmarks — like Spruce Street and the old Saugus train depot. You'll also twist your neck a bit because you'll see actors walk through the front door of a recognized house in Newhall and then look out a window and you're suddenly four miles down the road overlooking a Saugus vista.

It's also interesting seeing Sinatra playing both bad guy and second fiddle in this low-budget drama.

Interestingly, Sinatra and Hayden crossed paths - sort of - via famed author, Mario Puzo. In Puzo's “The Godfather,” the author created a none-too-thinly-disguised character of Johnny Fontaine, a world-famous and talented crooner/movie star who is a carbon copy of the real Frank Sinatra. (And Hayden played the crooked cop in the same movie.) Reportedly, Sinatra threatened Puzo in a Hollywood restaurant for both the similarity and for “outing” his supposed La Cosa Nostra godfather in real life.

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Suddenly

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Of course, the diminutive Sinatra was famous for threatening people. There are stories he even offered to have Woody Allen's legs broken after the comedian started dating his wife's Korean adopted daughter, Soon Yi Previn. At the time, Allen was married to Mia Farrow - Sinatra's ex-wife.

Another little tidbit about Frank? Sinatra was the first actor to be offered the role of "Dirty Harry." He turned it down, as did John Wayne and Paul Newman. Some up-&-coming Spaghetti Western star named Clint Eastwood would get the part.

Back to "Suddenly," it never was a box office hit. It almost disappeared completely.

Sinatra was a close friend and supporter of John F. Kennedy. When the president was assassinated in 1963, Sinatra reportedly attempted to buy every print of the film and have them all destroyed. The similarities to his role in "Suddenly" and the killing of JFK haunted him.

Several local SCV video outlets carry the CD of "Suddenly." It can also be purchased for a pittance.

It's a must for any local film buff.

Author, local historian and one of America's top columnists, John Boston has earned more than 100 major writing awards. Look for his new monster website, thejohnbostonmagazine.com to launch in late 2011.

Recent Docents

Thank you to the following members who served as docents during September and October:

Frank Adella	Harold Hicks
Phyllis Berman	Barbara Martinelli
Jeff Boultinghouse	RuthAnne Murthy
Laurie Cartwright	Alan Pollack
Sioux Coghlan	The Questers *
Evan Decker	Konrad Summers
Sarah Floyd	Gordon & Marlene Uppman
Francesca Gastil	Michelle Veasman

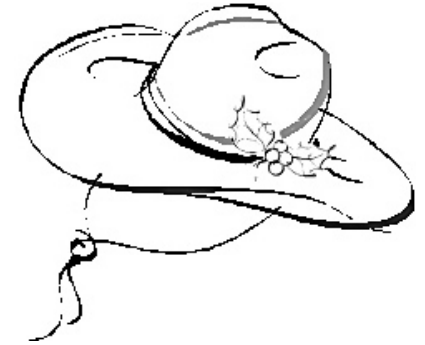
Also, thank you's to the following, who opened the doors so that the docents could do their jobs:

Duane Harte	Barbara Martinelli
Ed Marg	Alan Pollack
Cathy Martin	Sue Yurosek

Don't know who the Questers are?
See www.questers1944.org

More Scenes from Make a Difference Day





You're Invited to Our Christmas Open House: Saturday, December 10, From 1:00 to 4:00 PM.

We'll Have all the Buildings Open: See the Progress On the Library, Carolers and Cowboy Christmas Music. An Old Fashioned Holiday Treat!



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Telephone (661)254-1275 Headquarters: Saugus Train Station 24101 San Fernando Road, Newhall Open to the public each Saturday and Sunday 1:00 to 4:00 PM Kingsbury House open the first Sunday of each month from 1:00 to 4:00 PM

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"Preserving the best of the past for the good of the future"

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